

GUARDING THE TREASURE

[Harry Foster]

THE Finnish merchant was at Helsinki Airport waiting to take a plane to Milan in Italy when he was met by an official who asked him if he would do a favour for the sake of his country. The favour would be to take a parcel of valuable glassware and keep it carefully on his lap during the whole flight. Although not wanting to have the bother, he was a man who was always ready to serve his country, so he said 'Yes'; but he was very inquisitive to know the meaning of this unusual request.

He looked around and found that other passengers were being asked the same question, and it seemed that they also were agreeing, as they, too, were being issued with parcels of various shapes and sizes.

The explanation was that a Trade Exhibition was being held in Milan and that Finland had planned to display the superb glass articles made by one of its great artists. Everything had been arranged in good time, and the artist had provided some of his very best workmanship. It had been crated and sent off to Italy, but, alas! when the packing cases were opened it was found that the precious objects had been smashed to pieces.

At first those responsible were in despair, but they appealed to the artist in Finland to know if there could possibly be any replacements. The specimens of his work which had been broken were the only ones available, so at first the artist was also near to despair, and then he suddenly had an idea. He had made similar works of art as presents for his friends, and if they could only be collected from the various homes, they could take the place of the broken exhibits, that is, if the friends were willing to lend their precious treasures.

The telephone wires hummed as he called to one and another and explained the urgent situation asking them to be so kind as to lend their glassware for the Milan International Fair. Each one of them gladly responded, not only out of regard for their artist friend, but also for the honour of their beloved Finland. [129/130]

So the articles were assembled and each carefully wrapped, but then came the problem of how to get them safely and quickly to Milan. It was a double problem: first, how to avoid breaking anything this time, and then also how to get them there in time for the opening day.

The artist and his friends appealed to the Government, and someone there had this idea: Why not ask patriotic Finnish air travellers to carry them by hand? So this was why the merchant and his fellow passengers found themselves sitting in the plane, each with a precious parcel on his lap.

The idea proved a great success. All the beautiful glass objects arrived safely, and just in time for them to be taken to the exhibition, arranged and displayed, so that they were ready for the opening.

At first it seemed a trouble to the Helsinki merchant, and he was far from pleased to be asked to carry his parcel, but soon he realized that it was, in fact, a privilege. He found, too, that it gave him many new friends. He was no longer a separate and lonely passenger, but one of a party all sharing in the excitement of their task. They were drawn together by the special parcels which they carried, and in the end they all rejoiced together over its success.

Christians should also be drawn together by the privilege given to them of carrying something precious on life's journey. What we carry is the honour of the Name of our Lord, committed to us to be watched over and kept for Him until we finally hand it over to Him on the great Day of His appearing. Timothy was told: "Guard the treasure put into our charge, with the help of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us" (2 Timothy 1:14, N.E.B.).

I am sure that those passengers were extra careful of every movement when they embarked and travelled, and then as they landed. This was no ordinary journey for them. And for us, like Timothy, if we are true lovers of the Lord there is nothing in life which is ordinary. Wherever we go we are privileged to bear about the great treasure of the honour of His Name. - H. F.

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